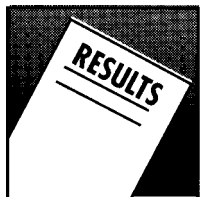


### How can I test water for lead?

Certified commercial laboratories can test for lead in drinking water. The cost ranges from \$15 to \$50 per sample. Contact your local health department or the New York State Department of Health for the names of laboratories approved to test drinking water for lead.

#### *Consumer Beware:*

Unscrupulous businesses have been caught using tests or selling filtering devices that have not been found to be effective. Use only approved laboratories for testing.

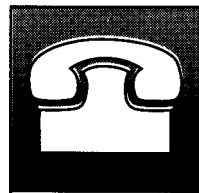
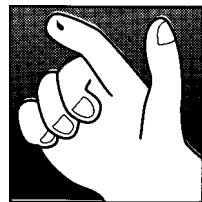


#### **What do the laboratory results mean?**

If the test confirms lead higher than 15 ggl (also reported as 15 parts per billion or .015 mg/l), then action may be appropriate. If you took what is called a "first draw" sample, you measured what was sitting in the pipes overnight and the best action is probably to run the water until cold before using it. If you took a "flush" sample, you measured closer to what you would be drinking; the proper response to an elevated level in that case would be to identify and remove the lead source or treat the water. Your local health department can advise you on the best options.

### How do I know if my family has high blood lead levels?

Lead in drinking water is only one possible source of lead to the body. Since our biggest concern is for small children, a New York State regulation calls for universal screening of all children at about age one and age two for blood lead levels. It is important to identify an elevated level of lead in a child as early as possible to reduce or remove the source of exposure, before any long-term health problems occur. Pregnant women should also discuss with their physicians the need for blood lead testing.



If you have questions concerning testing for lead in drinking water or if you want advice on how to lower the lead levels in your drinking water, contact your county or district health department office.

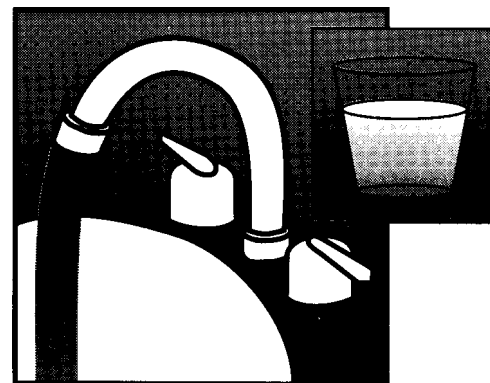
The New York State Department of Health also offers information. For more about water testing or interpretation of results, call the Bureau of Public Water Supply Protection toll-free at 800-458-1158 and request extension 6731. For questions about lead poisoning prevention and education, call 518-473-4602.



State of New York  
George E. Pataki, Governor  
Department of Health



## Get the Lead Out of Drinking Water



### What is lead?

Lead is a metal found naturally in the environment. It has also been widely used over the years in gasoline, house paint and plumbing fixtures. The amount of lead that is released into the environment each year has been greatly reduced by less use of leaded gas, starting in the mid-70s. Laws forbidding use of lead in house paint (1978) and lead in plumbing solder (1986) have helped as well. Still, lead can be a problem, especially in older homes.

### Why the concern?

People may be exposed to lead in the food they eat, the air they breathe and the water they drink. Lead can be harmful to health and cause problems when it builds up in the body. Too much lead in the human body can cause serious damage to the brain, nervous system and red blood cells.

Pregnant women and young children are at the greatest risk even with short-term, low level exposures. Young children between the ages of six months and six years are more likely to suffer health problems from lead exposure. Lead poisoning can slow a child's physical growth and mental development; and can cause behavior problems, mental retardation, kidney and liver damage, blindness and even death.

### What is the level of lead in public drinking water supplies?

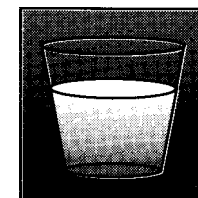
In July 1991, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established an action level for lead in drinking water at 15 µg/l (micrograms per liter), which is the same as 15 parts per billion (ppb). Water suppliers must test household tap water and take steps to reduce corrosion and lead levels in water. The schedule for when these steps must be taken depends on how many homes are served by the water system. If lead levels in the water are high and not quickly corrected, the water supplier is required to notify homeowners.

### Are there concerns about lead if I am on a private well?

In 1994, there was some concern about new submersible water pumps and the possibility that lead could leach out of brass or bronze parts. This followed laboratory experiments that showed small containers of water holding new pumps did have measurable levels of lead. When people with new well pumps actually sampled their water, however, lead levels were not elevated. It does not seem the lead in the pump parts is making a contribution to the drinking water. As pumps get older, the metal parts oxidize and form a coating, further reducing the likelihood that lead is leaching from submersible pumps.

### How does lead get into the water we drink?

Since natural levels of lead in New York State water supplies are low, lead in drinking water usually results from the use of lead pipe in water systems or lead-based solder on water pipes. Leaching of lead into water occurs when corrosive water dissolves lead from lead pipes or soldered joints. Soft, corrosive or acidic (low pH) water is more likely to cause leaching, or removal of lead into the water. Water left standing in the pipes over a long period of time also results in leaching. The longer the water stands in the pipes, the greater the possibility of lead being dissolved into the water. Stray electrical currents from improperly



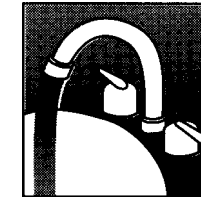
grounded electrical outlets or equipment also may increase the level of lead in drinking water. And, pipes that carry drinking water from the source to residences can contribute lead to the drinking water, if the pipes were constructed or repaired using lead materials.

### Can the risk be lowered?

Yes, the risk can be lowered, in most cases, pretty easily. To reduce the amount of lead in water:

Run the tap until water is cold to the touch before using it for drinking or cooking. This is especially important

after the water has been standing in the pipes overnight or over many hours. (The flushed water can be saved for watering house plants, washing dishes or general household cleaning.)



Use only water from the cold water tap for cooking, drinking or making a baby's formula. Hot water picks up more lead from pipes and solder.

Check household plumbing for lead-based pipes or solder. A plumber can help.

Use only lead-free materials in all plumbing repairs or new faucets and pipes. The use of lead solder in plumbing was banned in New York State in 1986. Ask the plumber to show you the label from any solder packaging being used. It should state that the solder is lead-free.